Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet

Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities

Non-verbal learning disabilities (NLD) are caused by problems on the right side of the brain. People with NLD are usually intelligent and have strong verbal skills. They tend to be very good at spelling and learning by repeating practice. It is hard for children and adults with NLD to learn things that don't involve spoken language. For example, people with NLD may have difficulty with balance and movement of their body. It may be hard for them to find their way from one place to another. They may not know how another person is feeling by looking at their face. People with NLD need to use spoken language to learn new things.

People who study NLD think:

- NLD may affect as many as 1 in 100 people.
- NLD affect females and males equally.
- NLD are caused by a problem on the right side of the brain.
- NLD are not passed from parent to child.
- NLD are not caused by emotional problems.
- NLD are not caused by poor eye sight.

Children and adults with NLD often have difficulty with these skills:

Balance and physical coordination

Learning how to ride a bike, tie shoe laces, kick a soccer ball or hold a pencil and learning to print are difficult for someone with NLD. A person needs to know and remember where their body is in space – this is hard for people with NLD to do.

Social skills

It is hard for children and adults with NLD to interact with other people. They do not understand body language. People with NLD may not notice the changes in another person's voice or be able to read the expressions on someone's face. It may be hard for them to recognize people they have met many times in the past. To do this a person has to store and remember pictures in their mind - people with NLD cannot do this.

Visual-spatial-organizational skills

It may be hard for children and adults with NLD to remember the shapes of letters or copy work from the blackboard. They may not be able to recognize an object or place they have seen before because they cannot make pictures in their minds. They may have a hard time finding their way to a new place.